

~~Oppression and Hypocrisy~~

Detected and Opened

FROM THE

HOLY SCRIPTURES:

As it respects

Magistrates, Ministers, and People.

IN A

S E R M O N

Upon the Occasion of

A General Fast,

Kept Decemb. 22. 1680.

By the Author of the *Plasters Doom,*
A True Son of the Church of *England.*

L O N D O N :

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A Fast-Sermon

Upon JOEL II. 13.

Rent your Heart and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God.

BY the Commands of God and the Government, we are here assembled to celebrate a Fast, and I have chosen this Text as suitable to the Occasion, because it instructs us how to perform our Duty herein both acceptably unto God, and profitably unto our selves; without which our present Fasting, and all our Religious Performances, are but a mere mocking of the Almighty, and putting a Cheat upon our own Souls.

I shall not insist on the Context any farther then to give you a general scope of this Prophecy, that you may see how this Command in the Text, *to rent our Heart and not our Garments*, doth arise.

The Prophet foreseeing sundry Judgments of God impending, and ready to fall on this drowsie stupid sottish People, calls on them to awake: *Awake ye Drunkards, Chap. 1.5. and weep and howl all ye drinkers of Wine:* And when he hath thus awakened them, he gives them such a dreadful description of those Judgments that the Lord was a bringing on their Land, that he declares *the very Earth shall quake before them, nay the Heavens themselves shall tremble at them*, in the 10th verse of this Chapter; and certainly they must be notable Judgments that makes both Heaven and Earth to

quake and tremble at them. You read in many places such Judgments threatened that the Earth should tremble at them ; but here are such Judgments as shall make the Earth and *Heavens* too, to tremble : Well therefore might the Prophet, after this amazing description of this great and terrible day of Judgment, which he denounced was coming on them, ask this question, *Who was able to abide it ?* ver. 11. For if the Earth quake, and the Heavens tremble at it, 'tis no marvel that the *Sinners in Zion* are afraid, and that *fearfulness surprizeth the Hypocrites*, as *Isaiah* expresseth it, *Isa. 33. 14.*

The Prophet having thus declared the greatness and terribleness of their approaching-Doom, propoſeth to them the *one and only* way to prevent it, and that is *Repentance*. One branch of which Proposition, is this of my Text ; for the whole runs thus : *Therefore, as I now saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning*, ver. 12. *and rent your heart, and not your Garments*, as here in the Text.

To which, thus briefly I have brought you, and given you the occasion of these words, *Rent your Heart and not your Garments* : Which before I handle, I must crave leave to give you these following Remarks upon the Context.

1. That the Almighty seldom or never strikes a Nation with his Judgments, but he gives them first a *Warning* of it.
2. That the Warnings that God gives a Nation of his approaching Judgments, ought to rous and awaken them to their *Duty*.
3. That nothing can avert Gods Judgments on a Nation for their Sins, but *Repentance*.
4. That it hath ever been the wont and practice of the true Prophets and faithful Ministers of God, to preach *forgiveness* of Sins and *aversion* of Judgments, upon no other terms but *Repentance only*.

And now I proceed with the Text, *Rent your heart and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God*. Wherein you have these three particulars :

Two *Duties* enjoyned. And
One *Practice* forbidden.

The two *Duties* enjoyned, are these :

1. *Rent your Heart.*
2. *Turn unto the Lord your God.*

The Practice forbidden, is, That they should not rent their *Garments*. The

The whole Text is but a *figurative Expression*; for it was a Custom amongst the *Jews*, upon the hearing of any sad disaster that either had or was like to happen upon their Nation in general, or upon their Families or themselves in particular, to *rent their Garments*. So upon the sight of *Joseph's Coat*, the Patriark *Jacob rents his Cloaths*, Gen. 37.34. through an apprehension that his Son was destroyed; and so you find King *Hezekiah*, upon that *invective and menacing Speech of Rabsheka*, *rent his Cloaths*, Isa. 37.1. Likewise *Ezra*, upon hearing the enormous behaviour of the People, *rent his Garments and his Mantle*, Ezra 9.3. And you read that *Tamar*, King *David's Daughter*, being ravished by her Brother *Amnon*, *rent her Garment of divers colours*, 2 Sam. 13.19.

But this external sign of Sorrow grew at length so into mere custom and formality, that it signified no more the fence of their minds, then our common *wearing of Mourning* does: And therefore God, that did accept it while there was any thing in it, now it was grown to be a *Ceremony only*, would have none of it, but expressly forbids it, saying, *Rent your heart and not your Garments*. As if the Lord should say, Come, don't ye think to cheat me with your pitiful feigned and formal *Repentance* of renting your Garments, and tearing your Cloaths, while you keep your sins whole: But instead of all this ado of renting your Garments, *rent your Hearts*: 'Tis not your *Cloaths*, 'tis your *Wickedness* and your *Corruptions* that I would have you rent off from you. Wherefore *rent your Hearts*, the *Seat and Fountain* of all your guilt; and don't ye think that the tearing your Coats shall expiate your Sins, or make an amends for your breaking my Commands, and the defiling your own Consciences.

Wherefore the Text affords us this Proposition:

That true Repentance, and such as is acceptable to God, consists not in any formal exterior Observations, but in the renting off of Sin from the Heart.

The terms of this Proposition are so plain that they need no explanation: for the known and common acceptation of *Repentance*, is the best, that *It is an Aversion from Sin, and a Conversion to God*.

And by *formal and exterior Observations*, is meant such Religious Performances as *Custom* and *Tradition*, not *Divine Injunction*, hath deliver'd to, and imposed upon us. And therefore I proceed to the proof of the Proposition, which is two-fold:

1. *Negative*, That true Repentance, and such as is acceptable to God, consists not in any formal outward Observations.

2. *Positive*, That it doth consist in renting off Sin from the heart. But I doubt I shall not be able in this present opportunity to reach unto this second head of our Proposition. Wherefore to the first or negative part thereof.

1. That true Repentance, and such as is acceptable unto God, consists not in any formal exterior Observations : For the proof of this part of the Proposition, take ye the *Pharisees*, who certainly were the greatest Sticklers for, and Promoters of such Observations, of any Generation of men that ever you read of, either in *sacred Writ*, or in *prophane* : for they were so eaten up with the rust and canker of Ceremonies and Traditions, that Christ tells you, that *they made the Commandments of God of none effect* by them, *Mat. 15.6.* and yet you find these men, for all their multitudes of formalities and superficial Observations, were so far from true Repentance, and such as is acceptable unto God, that our blessed Lord accounts and calls them but *Hypocrites*, who though they did *draw nigh to him with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, yet their hearts were far from him*, vers. 7,8. And therefore it is worthy your notice, that our Saviour denounces *more Woes* against this Generation, then against all the World besides ; and testifies that for all their pretended zeal and sanctity, in their formal and outward demeanor, that very *Publicans* and *Harlots* (though they are but a brace of the most hateful and abject kind of People that the World has in it, yet even those) should *go into the Kingdom of Heaven before them*, *Matth. 21.31.*

In *Isa. 1.10,11.* you meet with a Crew of *Rulers* and *people* so wickedly religious, that they quite nauseated the *Almighty* with their *Sacrifices* ; insomuch that *God forbids them bringing any more* : and yet for all this puther of Devotion, you find that these mighty religious Rulers, were but *Rulers of Sodom*, and these *bigotted people*, were but the *people of Gomorrah*, vers. 10. and therefore they and their Oblations both, were but *an abomination to the Lord*. So that you see, true Repentance consists not in exterior Observations.

The Prophet *Jeremiah* is commanded by the Lord in the beginning of Chap.7. to go and stand in the Lords House, and to proclaim there, to all that *go in at those gates* to worship the Lord, *That they should amend their ways and their doings* : What ? Amend their ways and their doings when they are going into the Temple ? And going

going thither too to worship the Lord there? Yes: for you may go to Church, and to Gods worship, and yet go to the Devil too for all that, if you are but such Worshippers as these were: for in ver. 9. you have this Character of them, that they were *Thieves, and Murderers, and Adulterers, and perjured Persons, and Idolaters*; which are but a pretty odd parcel of Worshippers of God: And yet, as odd as they are, you hardly find any in all the Scriptures that cry up the Temple, and God Almighties Church and Worship, at a higher rate then thele do, ver. 4. Insomuch that when the Prophet call'd for true Repentance from them, to prevent that great Captivity was coming on them; they had such a *confidence* in their Temple, and their worshipping therein, that they would not credit him in any of the threatnings and denunciations against them. But for all their confidence in, and crying up of the Temple, pray see what a Resolution the Lord takes up, concerning these wicked formal impious wretches; for he commands his Prophet, ver. 16. that he should *not so much as pray for them: Pray not thou (faith the Lord) for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me, for I will not hear thee.* What a Church! and a Church that boasts it self so much in its Worship! that pays so much Reverence and Respect to the *Temple* of the Lord! that are such constant frequenters of *Divine Service*, and of his Worship therein! and that are every way so abundant in their Formalities and Religious Observations! and yet to be such miscreants that neither Cry nor Prayer is to be lift up for them! Yes, such miscreants you see a Church may be. Wherefore 'tis not your going to Church, no nor your performing Worship there, that will ought avail you, if you *amend not your ways and your doings*; for these both went and worshipped too in the Temple, and yet you see what vile Wretches, nay very Castaways, they were for all that. From whence 'tis manifest, that *true Repentance*, and such as is acceptable unto God, consists not in any formal out-side Performance whatsoever.

And the Reasons are plain: for if true Repentance, that is, such as is well-pleasing to God, did consist in these customary external Compliances; then the wickedest men, and the worst of *Hypocrites*, would be more *acceptable to God*, than the sincerest Christians; nay, *Papists* would be more *acceptable to God* than *Protestants*; and *Pagans* then either: for the worse the Worship is, the more are the Ceremonies. *Balaam* will have *Seven Altars* to *Elijah's One*: for they are fain to supply the *defects* of their *Worship* by the *multitude* of *exterior Performances and Observations*. Again,

Again, If true Repentance, and such as is acceptable to God, did consist in such Observations, then all the Scriptures were a falsity : For why should the Lord command us to *Rent our Hearts and not our Garments*, if the renting of the Garments is that which is acceptable to him ? Why should the Lord profess himself to be weary of their Sacrifices, (though a part of the worship instituted by himself) in the first of *Isaiah*, and command us to *wash our selves*, to *make our selves clean* by putting away *the evil of our doings from before his Eyes*, and bid us *cease to do evil*, and *learn to do well*? If muttering over a few Prayers by rote, and sorrowful faces, &c. might serve the turn ; to what end are we told in the holy Word of God, that the Lord is the *Searcher of Hearts*, and the *Tryer of Reins*, and that he knows all our *thoughts a far off*, if in the work of Repentance, and all our Religious Performances, the formal and exterior Observations are that which are acceptable to him ? Nay, why is *Repentance*, why is *Faith*, why is *Love* called *Work* and *Labour* in the Scripture ? Why is the way that leads to the Heavenly Kingdom called a *narrow Way*, and the Gate a *straight Gate*, and we commanded to *strive to enter in*, and told that *many shall seek to enter in that shall not be able* ? For all this labour and toil may be *saved*, if formal and meer bodily Observations makes us acceptable unto God. The first worship that we find performed unto God, are the Offerings of the two Brothers *Cain* and *Abel*, in *Gen. 4.* and sure no man can render a reason why *Cain* and his Offering should be rejected, if formal and exterior Observations be onely required by the Lord.

Wherefore let us now see what profitable Use we may make from this Branch of the Proposition, *That true Repentance, and such as is acceptable unto God, consists not in any formal and exterior Observations.*

1. And the first Use shall be for *Instruction*. Is it so, that true Repentance consists not in any exterior Observations ? Then hence we may learn how much and deservedly they are to blame, that place Repentance more in renting the garment, than in renting the heart ; and that cry up *Conformity* to a Ceremony, or some external Observation, as an *essential* part of true Repentance : Who instead of preaching up a good, a virtuous, and a *Christian Life*, and of professing their People to bring forth *Fruits meet for Repentance*, do lay out a deal of *Dull Divinity* in urging their Auditors to a thorow Conformity to a few *Humorous and Capricious Ceremonies*.

In the 15th of St. Matth. and the beginning of the Chapter, you find the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, for want of other matter, quarrelling our Saviour, because his Disciples *transgressed the Tradition of the Elders*, in eating Bread without washing their hands: A tidy crime, and cause of quarrel, was it not? And yet you may see by our Lords reasoning, that they were such Traditional and *Ceremony-Fops*, that they would quarrel him and his Disciples too sooner and fiercer upon this account, than if they had broken a Commandment of God: Would to God the Papists *only* had the Succession of this Pharisaical temper among them; but the more is the pity, we daily see and hear *Protestant* *Pharisees*, as well as *Popish*, who had rather mix Heaven and Earth together, and hazard the confusion of *Church*, nay and *State* too, than part with a dry and empty Ceremony: what if I should instance but in Christening with the Sign of the *Cross*? I doubt I am not uncharitable in thinking, that many even of *us Protestant Ministers*, would rather never Christen a Child at all, than to Christen it without that Ceremony, though they do acknowledge that Christening is a *Divine Command*, and the Signing with the *Cross* is but a *Humane*; and that the Child is never the better for it, nor never the worse without it. As for them indeed that do think that the Sign of the *Cross* hath some *magical* vertue in it, that it is a spiritual *Spell* to drive away Spirits and *Hobgoblins*, and a good guard against *Jack o'th' Lanthorn* and *haunted Houses*, and that do believe it keeps the *Devil* in some better *deorum* towards us than otherwife he would observe, they have *some pretence* to be tenacious of it; but we that laugh at such *fooleries*, and that deny these *Popish* and *pious Frauds*, as fitter to be ridiculed than to have any *Reverence* done them; for us, I say, to be so *peevishly* fond of it, as that we will break all the bonds of *Love* and *Peace* rather than part with it, does shew us rather of an *obstinate* and a *passionate*, than of a *Religious Mind*. I might instance in other Ceremonies also, but this is sufficient to instruct us, that our Conformity to formal and exterior Observations in Religious matters, is no *Essential* part of a sound and true Repentance.

Secondly, Is it so, that true Repentance, and such as is acceptable

ceptable unto God, consists not in any formal and exterior Observations ; then be *instructed* not to overvalue them ; there is a mighty propensity in our Natures, to lay of our exterior Observations, as *Micah* did of his *Consecrated Levite*, *Judg. 17. last ver.* Now know I, says he, *that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my Priest.* But he was so mistaken, that you find in the very next Chapter, that this *very Priest*, which he hugg'd himself so much for, joyn'd with a company of Robbers to plunder his Masters House, and steal away his Gods from him, *ver. 20.* So all your Confidence in the external parts of Religion, will but serve you like this Levite, *Cheat* and *deceive* you. Nay of all the deceits in nature this is the most dreadful, for it not only deludes you to the day of your *Death*, but continues its delusion at the very day of *Judgment* ; for in the *7th* of *St. Matthew*, you find that these *Confidants* come with such a marvellous boldness to Christ, that they *argue* the matter with him, saying : *Lord, Lord, have we not preached in thy Name, and in thy Name have cast out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful works ?* *vers. 22.* Nay the Evangelist *St. Luke* goes further, and tells you that these *mistaken Souls* demand entrance into *Heaven*, saying : *Lord ! Lord ! Open unto us : For we have (received the Sacrament) eat and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our Streets,* *Luke 13. 25, 26.* Good Lord ! what a dreadful delusion is this, that carries exterior Professors not only through *Death*, but to the day of *Judgment* too ? and are never convinced of their *mistake* till they receive that final and eternal *doom*, *Depart from me ye workers of Iniquity*, *v. 27.* And certainly it is from hence that *St. John* the *Baptist* thus chargeth the *Pharisees* and *Saduces* that came to his *Baptism*, *Think not to say within your selves, we have Abraham to our Father*, *Matth. 3. 9.* As if he should say ; *Have a care, for that thought will make you rest short of true Religion, and make you miscarry at the last.* And as *St. John* bid them that they should not think to say, that they had *Abraham* to their *Father* ; so I bid you, *do not think to say that you have the Church for your Mother* ; for it is not your being *Sons of the Church*, if you reckon your Sonship merely from your *Birth*, or *Baptism* or *outward Conformity*, that will

will profit you any thing ; for you may come to Church and perform all the Ceremonies and exterior parts of worship, and yet be bid depart at last among the workers of Iniquity, if the *Power of Godliness* as well as the *Profession* thereof be not found in you : Wherefore, be instructed not to *overvalue* any formal or external part of Religion whatsoever. And thus much for *Instruction* : Come we next to *Rprofe*.

If it be so, that true Repentance, and such as is acceptable unto God, consists not in any outside Formalities ; then be Reproved all ye of the *Clergy*, that do so utterly pervert your *Office* and the *Ends* of your Ministry. What, were you sent of God to preach Repentance and remission of Sins to the Children of men ? Are you sent by God to cry out to men, that they should *Repent*, for the *Kingdom of Heaven is at hand* ? *Matth. 3. 2.* And to awake them that sleep, that they should *Arise from the dead*, that *Christ may give them light* ? *Ephes. 5. 14.* What, were you sent to bid men *Rent their hearts and not their garments*, and to turn men from *darknes to light*, and from the power of *Satan unto God* ? *Matth. 26. 18.* And do you spend your Ministry about such trifling stuff, such sorry things as you your selves acknowledge to be but *indifferent* ? Truly this is but *indifferent Divinity*, and such as I doubt you will give but a very *indifferent Account* of, when our great Lord and Master shall appear ; therefore pray bethink your selves : For,

First, Consider seriously whether ever God required this at your hands : He hath required here in the Text you see, that you should bid men *Rent their hearts and not their Garments* : But where hath he required you to teach men to *Rent their Garments and not their hearts* ? to observe the formal and exterior parts of Religion more than the *real* and interior parts thereof ? For Religion is a *heart work*, and consists not in *Formality* but *Reality* ; and therefore the good men of God have prayed in all Ages like *David* in the *51 Psal. ver. 10.* *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me.* Hence is it that King *Hezekiah* beseeched the Lord to remember for him, how he had walked before him (what in Ceremony and *Formality* ? No ;) in *truth and with a perfect heart*, *I/a. 38. 3.* and therefore the true Prophets of God have ever cryed out, *O*

Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, ver. 4. 14. They are pharisaical Hypocrites that cry up the washing of the *hands*, and that place the total of Religion, Divine Worship and Devotion, in exterior Observations, where *Gods Word* never placed it: In the fifth of St. *Matthew*, among those glorious *Beatitudes* of our blessed Saviour, you will find one appropriated to *the pure in heart*, ver. 8. but you no where find a blessing appropriated to formal Ceremonies, or bodily Gestures, or lip Devotions; wherefore, those sowre and angry *Gentlemen* that are so mightily for the *Gaityes* of exterior Observances, may do well to bethink themselves in time, what answer they will give the Lord to that great question, *Isa. 1. 12. Who hath required this at your hands?*

Secondly, Let those that fall under this Reproof, bethink themselves, whether in their heat and zeal of preaching up *Conformity* to exterior Observances, they have not fed their Flocks with *husks* instead of Bread? And by reason of this may not your Hearers cry out with the Prophet, *My Leanness! my Leanness! Wo unto me, Isa. 24. 16.* In the Jewish Church there were many external Observances commanded, and therefore had *Divine Authority* for their warrant; and yet when these Externals were screw'd up to that height, and grew so rank that Religion run all into stalk, and had nothing but a bare appearance and mere outside in it, the Lord loathed and abhorred them, though they had his own Precept for them: Pray will you see how that great and Evangelical Prophet *Isaiah* both opens and shuts up his Prophecy: In his first Chapter you find him opening his Prophecy thus: *Thus saith the Lord, Bring no more vain Oblations, Incense is an Abomination to me, the New Moons and Sabbaths, the Calling of Assemblies I cannot away with, it is iniquity even the solemn meetings; your New Moons and your appointed Feasts my Soul hateth, they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them.* And now see how he shuts up his Prophecy in his last Chapter: *He that killeth an Ox is as if he slew a man, he that sacrificeth a Lamb as if he cut off a Dogs neck: he that offereth an Oblation as if he offered Swines blood, he that burneth Incense as if he blessed an Idol, ver. 3.* Yet Sacrifices, Oblations, Incense, New Moons, Sabbaths, their

their solemn Assemblies, and their Festivals were all command-
ed by the Lord ; but when all Religion came to be put in these
exterior Observations, and that they eat up and usurped the
place of the *life and power* thereof, they became an Abomina-
tion to God and all good men, and their Sacrifices, Oblations,
and Incense, were but as Murder, Prophaney, and Idolatry
before the Lord. A mighty memorable and particular instance
of this matter, you have in the Second of *Kings*, Chap. 18. ver.
4. In the third Verse it is said, that King *Hezekiah* did that
which was *right in the sight of the Lord*, according to all that
David his Father did. And the fourth Verse tells you what
those right things were ; He removed the *high Places*, he
brake the *Images*, he cut down the *Groves*, and that he
might make clear work, it is added, that he brake in pieces
the *brazen Serpent that Moses had made*. The occasion of ma-
king it you will find in the twenty first of *Numbers*, which was
thus : The Children of *Israel* in their Journeyings in the Wil-
derness, were grievously afflicted with *fiery Serpents*, which
bit and killed many of them : Upon this the people besought
Moses, that he would pray unto God for them, that he would
take away those Serpents ; which *Moses* did : And the Lord
gave this answer to the prayer of *Moses*, ver. 8. *Make thee a*
fiery Serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass, that
every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live. And
in the ninth Verse, *Moses made this Serpent of Brass, and put*
it upon a pole, and it came to pass that if a Serpent had bitten
any man, when he beheld that Serpent of brass he lived, as the Lord
had promised. And you find that this brazen Serpent had the
honour to be reckoned a *Type of Christ*, even by our Lord him-
self, *John 3. 14. As Moses lift up the Serpent in the Wilderness,*
even so (says our Saviour) must the Son of Man be lifted up;
that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have ever-
nal life. How then comes it about, that the breaking this bra-
zen Serpent in pieces, should be one of those *excellent Acts*
which is said to be right in the sight of the Lord ? Why, the
Text tells you that the Children of *Israel* burnt *Incense* to it :
And when any thing becomes an *Idol*, though it hath been ho-
noured with never so great a Divine presence, and hath per-
formed

formed never so many and mighty operations, and have been never so much instrumental in the hand of God, to work *wonders* in the world, yet it must be removed and destroyed: A Mind that is thoroughly set for God, and a *Magistrate* that is resolved to discharge his duty aright, must down with not only *Images* and *Groves*, and those grosser parts of Idolatry and *Will-worship*; but the *brazen Serpent* also, when it not only ceaseth to propagate true Religion, but is set up in opposition against it: For though it have been never so useful and serviceable to *heal* and *save* the people formerly; yet when it does degenerate and becomes instrumental to destroy them, it should down too; for 'tis not their past excellency nor service should prevail with you to spare them, when they are become a present damage. Well then, if exterior Observations of Gods own appointment, and such as have had his *express Commands* to warrant them, may become so abominable, when it runs up into Forms and Ceremonies only, and engages it self in a direct opposition to the power and life of Religion, how *abominably abominable* must those Observations needs be that have no *sacred Sanction*, and at best nothing but humane Precepts and humor to maintain them? And are they to be reproved that exalt and cry up the formal and external Observations of *Instituted Worship*, and give it the preference to the internal and Spiritual part of Religion, as such as do but betray and undo their hearers? And are they to be excused that magnifie and exalt the formal and exterior Observations of *invented Worship*, to the eternal and everlasting Ruin of the Souls that credit them? God forbid: But I must go on.

Thirdly, Let such as are included in this Reproof, bethink themselves; for whatever they may fancy, they are but of the *Devils side*, and are but doing his work; for God calls for renting the heart, 'tis the Devil that would *shamm off* this duty by renting of the Garments; for he cares not how much nor how abounding you are in this work of exterior Observations, so you do but let alone *That*: he will compound with you, and let you pay Tithes of Mint, Cummin, and Annise, all the days of your life if you will, so you will but omit the *weightier matters* of the Law, Judgment, Mercy and Faith. Nay, he'll aid

aid and encourage you in your formal and exterior Observations, so that you will but rest there and go no further; for he'll let you be indefatigably zealous in that work: In the 18th Chapter of the first Book of *Kings*, you find the strangest Question started, that ever you read of in any Book either Religious or Prophane; for the Question was, *Who should be God?* The God of Heaven or *Baal*? The Priests and Worshippers of *Baal* contended strongly that *Baal* was God, and to be served and followed: The Prophet *Elijah* asserts that the *Lord is God*, and that they ought to serve and follow him. At length they agreed in this issue, that two Bullocks should be brought, and the Clergy that were for *Baal* should choose one of these Bullocks, and cut it in pieces and lay it on wood, and put no fire under; and the Prophet *Elijah* would dress the other Bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under, and they should both call on the Name of their Gods, and the God that answered by Fire, he should be God, *vers. 23, 24.* Well! this was done; and now pray mark the carriage of these Worshippers: The Priests, the Text tells you, called on the Name of *Baal* from *Morning to Noon* in their dull *Letany*, saying, *O Baal hear us, we beseech thee to hear us good Baal; and they leaped up and down about the Altar*; but there was no hearing, nor no answering for all that. Then they cryed aloud, and cut themselves with Knives and Launcets till the blood gushed out; and this they did until the *Evening Sacrifice*, but received no answer still. And now the holy Prophet comes to act his part, and pray observe, that he useth no such *Formal* and *Exterior Observations*; no *Caperings* nor *Cringings* neither about the *Altar*, nor no *Canting* out of a little *Nonsense* or *Tautology* from *Morning to Noon*, and from *Noon to Night*: No cutting nor flaying himself, nor mingling blood with his Sacrifice, but calmly and humbly addresseth himself to God, in an honest and plain Prayer suitable to the occasion. *Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt Sacrifice, and the Wood, and the very Stones*, in so prodigious a manner, that all the people were convinced, and falling on their faces, with an universal Vote cryed out, *The Lord he is God, the Lord he is God.* Verse 37, 38, 39. From whence you may discern, how elaborate

elaborate and indefatigate a corrupt Clergy is to propagate the Devils side, and the worser Worship; and how they lay out themselves in promoting the Observation of exterior Ceremonies, which are of no avail. They cry aloud, frisk about the Altar, and cut themselves like any mad, and do a world of things which were never commanded by God, and which are but ridiculous among men; and yet all this Frenzie must pass for true Religion and *Decency* of Worship, or they'll quarrel you for *Fanatiques*. One would wonder what *Baalam* mean'd, *Numb. 23, &c.* where he commands *seven Altars* to be built, and *seven Oxen* and *seven Rams* to be prepared: One would think that he were going to offer to a whole *Hierarchy of Gods*, did not the Scripture every where shew us, that hypocritical false Prophets and false Worshippers are mighty Wonderfull *abounding* in their Altars and Offerings, and all the exterior parts of Religion: pray will you take a view of that formal Gentleman you meet with in the 18th of *St. Luke, vers. 12.* and see how he pranks himself up with his exterior performances: *I fast twice a week* (says he) *I give Tithes of all that I possess*; and yet for all that he was but a proud *Pharisee* still, a wicked false Hypocrite still, and came out of the Temple the same man that he went into it; to that though he fasted and went to Church every *Wednesday* and *Friday*, yet he had been as good he had stayed at home; for he got no good by going thither: It only prided him up to despise his Neighbours, and wrought in him a Conceit that he was better than them; and pray God this be not the Case of *too many* of us: For while we lay the stress of all Religion upon formal and exterior Observations, we are but doing the *Devils work*, even when we are engaged in *Gods Service*. For whiles we are but for Renting of the Garments only, and so quarrelsomly set for formal and exterior Observations, we may pray and preach too in the Temple as long as we will, and yet be still but on the Devils side for all that.

Fourthly, Again, bethink your selves, you that are concern'd in this Reproof, that while you are for Renting of the

the Garments only, for the outside, gilded part, or Husk of Religion; you are but for a *Faction* and a Party, and have no Communion with the *Universal Church* of Christ: You are but for Christians of your own *Size* and *Hue*, and grow up into a little *creeping narrow spirit*, that can never love nor serve any Soul but what is just and directly of your own dimension: Whereas a Christian of the *Universal Church*, is of a large, comprehensive, generous Spirit and Principle, and loves a good and a virtuous man, that makes it his Religion to Rent his Heart and not his Garments, let his *persuasion* in other and minuter things be what it will. For this is *Gods Religion*, all other is but *Mans*, and subject to Innovation and Changes, according as their humours vary, and must be managed by brutal and unnatural *heats* and *fury*: Hence is it that you see those that are for Renting the Garments, for formal and outward Rites, are alwayes sowre and *quarrelsome*, fretting themselves, and vexing others, if they come not up to every Punctilio of their Observances: For they quarrel your *Carriage*, your *Company*, your *Discourse*, and in a word your whole Conversation. For 'tis a Spirit of such a filthy, rude, imposing Nature, that you must be an absolute Slave to it, or it is never satisfied. Pray look into the second of St. *Mark*, and you will there find these men quarrelling our Saviour upon all these Accounts, for they fall out with him no less than four times in that one Chapter. First, They quarrel his Discourse, and charge him with *Blasphemy*, in saying to the sick of the Palsey, *Son, thy sins are forgiven thee. Why doth this man speak Blasphemy*, say they, *who can forgive sins but God only?* verl. 5, 7. Secondly, They quarrel him for his Company, and charge him with *Profanity*, in eating and drinking with *Publicans and Sinners*: *How is it*, say they, *that he eateth and drinketh with Publicans and Sinners?* verl. 16. Then they quarrel his Conversation, and charge him First with *Neglect of Duty* in his Non-observance of *Fasting*: *Why do the Disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast*, (say they) *but thy Disciples fast not?* verl. 18. And then lastly, with the breach of the *Sabbath*, when his Disciples plucked the Ears

of Corn: *Why do thy Disciples on the Sabbath day, say they, that which is not lawful?* vers. 24. So that our blessed Saviour himself, you see, who was so exact in all the parts of his Conversation, could not please them, neither *feasting* nor *fasting*: For if you go one Inch too swift or too slow for their pace, they run upon you presently, and reckon you none of their *Church*; and truely it matters not much whether you are or no: For their *Church* consists of a *little Faction*, of a few Formal waspish Fops, that place more Religion in an *old Cobweb'd* or a new *upstart Ceremony*, than a good man durst place in his exactest performances. These are those which our Lord calls *blind Guides*, and denounces so many Woes against in the 23d of St. *Matthew*, and you may ever know them by that Character which he hath given them in the 24th *Verse*, they *strain at a Gnat*: Are mighty offended at your omission of some poor starveling exterior Observation: *But swallow a Camel*. You may *drink*, and *whore*, and *tare*, and *swear*, and be as debauched as a Devil, and this never offends them, they will never quarrel you for this; for this will down well enough. For though they compass Sea and Land to make a *Proteylete* to their Ceremonies and exterior Observations, yet when they have made him so, though he be *two-fold more the Child of Hell* than he was before, they are satisfied, vers. 15. So that you see whom they *convert*, they do but *pervert*: For they care not for increasing the *Church of Christ*, but lay out all their Care and Industry to greateren and increase their own *Faction and Party*. If they get but such as will Rent their Garments, and be of their Outside Religion and Profession, they have done their doe, and care not whether ever they rent their Hearts or no.

Fifthly and lastly, You that come under this Reproof, be think your selves betimes, for in your crying up the Renting of the Garments, formal and exterior Observations, against the Renting of the Heart, you are engaged in a direct Opposition to Christ: For his Kingdom, *Church* and *Worship* are all *Spiritual*, and built upon the sure Foundation of *Scripture Precepts and Divine Institutions*. But exterior Ceremonies and Observations are too much *Carnal*, and built but on the

the false bottom of humane Inventions and Injunctions. Pray see the second of the *Ephesians* and the twentieth verse, and you'll there find that the true Church is built *Upon the Foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner Stone.* And the same Apostle tells you in the 1 Cor. 3. 11. that *Other Foundations than this can no man lay,* that is, no man can warrantably and by any divine Authority lay any other Foundation than this that is laid. And therefore you see that those that are for exterior Observations, they leave the *Canon of the Scripture, and support their Building by Laws and Canons* of their own devising, and to oblige the Magistrate to give a Sanction to their devices, they decry not only the Law of God but the *Laws of the Land too,* and preach up and magnifie *Absolute Rule* as the Magistrates Right, and by that Bait and Lure draw the Government to their side; for they give to *Cesars* more than the things that are *Cesars*, that they may take away from the People the things that are *theirs*. Nor is it for *Cesars* sake that they do this neither, for they enslave us to the Magistrate for no other end, but that they may enslave the Magistrate and us both to *themselves*. For, for Gods sake what doth the King get by my *Conformity* to a few Ceremonies and formal Observations? Or what does he lose by my Non-Conformity to them? And if his Majesty neither gains by my Observance, nor is damaged by my non-Observance of them, wherein is it his interest to be concerned at it? And as his Majesty receives neither Advantage by the doing of it, nor Detriment by the leaving of it undone, so neither doth any of his people. For saving the *Reverence* due to the Folly of this humour, pray who is a penny the better for my going to Church? or a penny the worse if I should go to what they call a *Conventicle*? If then neither King nor People be benefited by the one, nor damaged by the other, how comes it to be the Interest of the Government to be so mightily or indeed at all concerned in the matter? Why nothing but that those Gentlemen that are so wonderfully fond and foolishly forward for Renting of the Garments, for a formal and external Gaiety in Religious Worship, perceiving they cannot carry on

a design so directly opposite to the pure and spiritual Worship of Christ, especially in a Reformed and Protestant Nation; without the aid of the Magistrate, they revive the *old Cheat*, and perswade the Magistrate that those that are for renting the Heart only, and are Non-Conformists as to renting the Garment or exterior Observations, are *Enemies to their Government*, and so frighten the Magistrate, that they think they have no other way to secure their Government but by destroying them; when the plain truth is, that 'tis themselves are afraid that if the Doctrine of renting the Heart only should prevail, they are *undone*; and therefore by their Art they transfer the fear that's on themselves to the Magistrate, and insinuate that the Government is *stab'd* through their sides, though you see neither the Magistrates nor the People are at all concern'd in the case, and that the controversie is only with them who are too strait laced in the point of renting the Garments, and that stand over stiffly for exterior Observations, in opposition to Christ in his more pure and spiritual worship of Renting the Heart: And so much for *Reproof*. Come we now to *Admonition*.

The third *Use* or Improvement of this Point shall be for *Admonition*, and this Admonition extends it self to all Persons, to the Governors and Governed.

First, To Governors.

Ye have heard the first Branch of the Proposition, That true Repentance and such as is acceptable to God, consists not in any Exterior Observations: Be admonished then, not to impose upon your people what can never be acceptable unto God. But remember that you are *Gods Vicegerents*, and therefore should impose nothing upon your Subjects but what is acceptable to him whom you represent, and what you have just ground to believe that he himself would impose were he personally present; and have you any ground to believe that if he were personally present, that he would *Act* against his own Commands, and *Punish* men because they would not break his own *Precepts*? For 'tis his Precept that you should only rent your Hearts, but that you should not rent your Garments; and do you think that the Lord would go against his own *Will*, and against his own *Word*? and if you think that

that he would not, then why do you? For God has not advanced you, and set you in those high Stations and in his Stead, that you should rule *ad libitum*, and make your own Lusts and not his Laws the *Standards* of your Actions; No, Let who will teach you these Doctrines, 'tis but slight *Crapedivinity*, and such as the Ancients and the Orthodox never knew: Listen not therefore to those that put you upon such wild and *Savage* Notions, to persecute all that are not for renting their Garments, for every formal and exterior Observation; and be not rode by those heady humerous persons to your own destruction. You have seen how they have *embroiled* this Kingdom, and that of *Scotland* too, in a bloody and intestine War upon the Account of *Ceremonies* and exterior observations, once already. For this quarel of theirs has cost more *English* and *Scottish* blood than all the Ceremonies of the *Roman Church* and *Ours* too are worth, though they were bound in one bundle both together. Wherefore please to Remember that Exhortation in the second *Psal.* and the tenth *vers.* *Be wise now therefore O ye Kings, be Instructed ye Judges of the Earth.* And truly ye have need of Wisdom and Instruction, for you stand but in slippery places. And if you trust your selves so wholly to the Conduct of others, as that that you will see by no Eyes but theirs, nor hear with no Ears but theirs, nor will make use of no fence of your own but theirs, you may soon slide. For if so great a Man and so great a Magistrate as *David* was, and one that kept such a diligent watch over himself, tells you that his feet were almost gone, *his steps had well nigh slipped*, *Psal. 73. 2.* surely Governours ought to be very carefull of their footing, and to see that they be not *trappanid*, neither by themselves, no nor by the *advice of others*, into precipitate Acts. How happy was it for King *Abisuerus* that he followed his own fence and not *Hamans*? and how happy had it been for *Pilate* if he had obeyed his own Judgment, and not followed the hot and furious Claimors of that *Corrupt Clergy*, *Math. 27. 20, 21, 22.* Have a care therefore how ye are engaged by others to lay out your Power, or else before you are aware you'l miscarry; in the Eleventh of *Matth.* and the Eleventh *verse*, you

you read of one of the greatest men that ever the World brought forth : For our Saviour testifies, that among them that are born of Women , there hath not *rosen a greater than John the Baptist*, and yet this great man *lost his Head to please a Miss*. For though King *Herod* feared him, and knew that he was a *just man and a holy* ; nay though he observed him, and when he heard him, did many things, and *heard him Gladly*, *Mark 6. 20.* yet *Herodias's Daughter Danced off his Head* for all that : so that you had need look about you that you be not surprized, and this in all Cases, but especially in those that relate to Renting the Garments and exterior Observations ; because your Flatterers will perswade you in that Case, that your sin is so far from being a sin, that it is a *Service to God*, and a Service to his *Church* ; according to that Prophecy of our Saviour, *Joh. 16. 2.* the time cometh that *whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God Service* ; and when men, especially Magistrates, are under that Mistake , that they reckon their *Sin* to be their *Duty*, they then *play the Devil for Gods sake*. In the *66* of *Isaiah* and the *5 verse*, you will find a people that hated their Brethren and cast them out, and yet said, *Let the Lord be Glorified* ; they sang their *Gloria Patri*, even while they were engaged in the Devils work : But the Text tells you that God should appear to the joy of them that were Hated and Persecuted, and their Enemies for all their Crying *Let the Lord be Glorified*, should be ashamed : 'Tis not therefore your Crying *Glory to the Father, To the Son, and to the Holy Ghost*, that will ought avail you, or stand you in any stead, while you hate and Persecute your Brethren, because they cannot Conform to our exterior Observations. Be admonished then to let your people alone ; and if they Rent their Hearts, Live honest and virtuous Lives, let it satisfy you, though they cannot rent their Garments and Conform to every outward Ceremony or Observance : And since the Lord hath Commanded them not to Rent their Garments, let not your Commands run counter or contrary to the Lords, lest you be found *fighters against God*, and *Advancers of your Laws in opposition to and above the Laws of the Almighty* ; in the

Prophecy

Prophecy of the Prophet *Malachy*, you find the Lord displeased that they offer'd up to him such *Blind* and *Lame* and *Sick* *Sacrifices*, that their *Governours* would not accept from their hands though they offer it unto them, *Mal. 1. 8.* And sure the Lord would be much more displeased, if *Governours* should Punish their People for Offering such *Sacrifices* as are acceptable unto him ; and the *Psalmist* tells you that the *Sacrifices* that are acceptable to God, are a *broken Spirit* : For a *broken and a contrite heart* (*sayes he*) *O God thou wilt not despise*, *Psal. 51. 17.* And therefore have we this Command in the Text, to Rent our Hearts, as the *only Sacrifice* that is Acceptable unto God ; and will you dare to contradict this Command ; and Oblige your people to Rent their Garments, which the Lord hath expressly forbidden , as that which is unacceptable to him ? God forbid. And thus much to the *Governours*. Come we now to the second part of this Admonition , to the *Governed*.

Is it so, that true Repentance, and such as is acceptable unto God , consists not in any formal or exterior Observations ? Then be you admonished to two Duties.

First, To Moderation.

Secondly, To Peaceableness.

1. To *Moderation* ; that's a great Exhortation the *Apostle* gives us in the fourth of *Philip*. and fifth verse, *Let your Moderation be known unto all men* ; and 'tis an admirable Reason that the *Apostle* annexeth to enforce his Exhortation, *For the Lord* (*says he*) *is at hand*. You see here in the Text, and from the plain Word of the Lord, that 'tis not renting your Garments, nor any exterial observations, but the renting of the Heart that is Commanded and Accepted of God. Then be not *immoderate* for any external Observances ; for if ye are, true Religion never will nor can take root in you ; In the fourth of *St. John*, Christ met with a poor *Samarian* Woman, and discours'd her so long that at length she saw he was a *Prophet*, and therefore resolved that she would improve the present Opportunity : (But how ?) Not by enquiring after the Truth of Worship, but about the Place : *Sir* (*sayes she*) *I perceive that thou art a Prophet, our Fathers Worship in this Mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the Place*

Place where men ought to Worship, v. 19. 20. Now pray see how Christ nips this little external Quære: And *Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this Mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem Worship the Father*, v. 21. and then goes on to shew her what true Worship was, and who the true Worshipers are, but fayes not one word of the *Place*. In like manner many are mightily inquisitive about *Places, Times, Gestures* and Circumstances of Worship, and have a great zeal for all these external parts of Religion, and yet are totally ignorant both of the true Worship and true Worshipers: wherefore you had need be very Moderate and Sober, that you be not so transported with external Observations, and run away with the *Shadow* instead of the Substance of Religion; for Moderation tempers the mind, and allayes those heats and excursions which otherwise it is apt to make: And therefore it is called a *being sober-minded*, in the 2 *Titus*, v. 6. for without this ye are like Mad Distracted persons, and will run upon a *Neighbour* or a *Relation* for dissenting from you in a Ceremony or some external Observation, as if he were a *Turk* or an *Infidel*: But this makes a man remember, that in Christ Jesus, *neither Circumcision nor Uncircumcision availeth anything, but a new Creature*, Gal. 6. 15. And therefore this teacheth us to put no such mighty stres and value upon that which is of no avail; but to imbrace Moderation as that which will balance the mind, and keep it in an even and sober posture at all times and in all cases.

2. Be admonisht to *Peaceableness*, and reckon not this admonition strange; for the holy Scripture tells you of some that *hate peace*; and the Psalmist saith, he had long dwelt with such, Psal. 120. 6. *My Soul* (fayes he) *hath long dwelt with him that hateth Peace: I am* (fayes he) *for Peace, but when I speak, they are for War*: And yet these Haters of Peace have alwayes the Impudence to complain *first*, and to burthen others with their Guilt; and if you search the Scriptures, you will find none so deeply culpable of this Crime as those that were for external Observations; for who so much oppose the Miracles and Doctrine of Christ, and so bloodily pursued him to the very Death, as those that were for the Traditions of the Elders?

And

And who raised the uproars, the mutinies and tumults against the Apostles of Jesus Christ in every Country, City, Town, and place where they came, but the same Spirit ? And yet they had the foreheads to accuse the holy Apostles, nay our blessed Lord and Saviour himself for *Seditious*, and the *Ringleaders of Sedition*. Be careful therefore that ye be not insinu'd to herd with this tumultuous and unpeaceable spirit; for if ye do, you l run clamouring with them to the Magistrate against your neighbours, and against your friends, to ruin and undo them for the non-observance of some external rites and customs. You see how fierce and savage this spirit hath been in all ages, and quite through the Scriptures, that have been for renting the garments and external observations. But pray look and see where you can find that they that were for *renting the heart* were ever tainted with this unpeaceable and turbulent temper. And yet (which is greatly to be lamented) you generally find the Magistrate take in with that mutinous spirit against this, and laying the imputations due to them upon these : *Hearest thou not (says Pilate to Christ) how many things they witness against thee ?* Mat. 27. 13. and yet they were all false Witnesses, and he himself was unjust ; they were such ; for after the Witnesses had spoken, he calls our Saviour *a just person*, vers. 24. and washeth his hands as innocent of his blood. And yet Oh the wickedness of an unjust Judge ! for all this, against the convictions of his own Conscience he falls in with that cursed impious and unpeaceable party against Christ. Have ye not need then to be admonish't to look well to your selves, that your hearts do not engage you to this unpeaceable spirit ? There ever was, and I am afraid still is too much *Tory-Divinity* in the world ; but you may easily know it, for it is always on the *Tantivy*, *away with him, away with him, crucifie him, crucifie him*, was ever their language. And if you do but ask why ? what evil hath he done ? this does but *whet* their rage, and make them urge the multitude to cry out the more, *Let him be crucified*. For they are act'd by a wild kind of ungovernable zeal, such as the Apostle St. Paul tells you he had before his Conversion, *Act. 22. 3. I was zealous towards God*, (says he), *as ye all are this day*; and that you may see what their zeal was that day, pray look into *Act. 21. 27.* you will find that some *Jews* which were of *Asia* (where St. Paul had been preaching) had spy'd him in the Temple at *Jerusalem*, and they *stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel help, this is the man that teacheth all men every where against the people*

people, and the Laws, and this place, and further, Brought Greeks also into the Temple, and hath polluted this holy place. And upon this outcry all the City was mov'd, and the people ran together, and they took Paul and drew him out of the Temple; and the Text tells you, *They went about to kill him*: and had certainly done it, had not a Captain of a band rescued him, *ver. 31.*

So that you see what their zeal at that day was, and is but the same which the same Apostle tells you in fewer words in *Phil. 3.6.* *That he was as concerning zeal a persecutor of the Church.* So that this wild kind of vagabond zeal, which is always converiant about external observations only, and spends it self but about the bark and husk of Religion, doth but make men the fiercer and the more invenom'd in their minds against true Christianity, and *renting the heart*; for this zeal will transport you to such *inquietudes* and extravagancies that ye will prefer a *Barrabas*, a Robber and Murtherer before Christ and a sincere Christian. It will make you mutinous and sticklers for the worst men, and the wickedest interest; what need have ye then of this admonition to be of peaceable spirits, that ye be not hurried away by a mistaken zeal into such strange and brutish exorbitances?

And thus much for *Admonition*, come we now to the next and last improvement of this Point, which is *Examination*.

And this shall be Threecold:

1. *To the Magistracy.*
2. *To the Ministry.*
3. *To the People.*

1. *To the Magistracy*: For I am for the old Computation of reckoning *Moses* before *Aaron*, and am for placing the Crown above the Miter; though I am sure this is no way to a *Bishoprick*; for all our new fashioned Divinity is for the other Calculation, and mightily dissatisfied if you don't put the *Church* before the *State*; however I address my self first to you: Is it so that true repentance, and such as is acceptable unto God consists not in *renting the garments*, or external observations? then be you exhorted to examine your selves whether you lay out your Magistracy consonant to, and agreeable with this Doctrine. The highest Character that was ever given to any Magistrate, is that which we find given to *David*, *That*

That he was a man after Gods own heart. And indeed the heart and mind of a Magistrate should be agreeable to the heart and mind of God, for he bears his Image, and is his Deputy in the Earth. Upon which account Magistrates are also stiled Gods in Scripture. Now therefore examine your selves as to this duty before you, and see how your hearts stand affected towards it. God is all for renting of the heart for *zeal* and *spiritual worship*, on such *days*, and in such duties as we are now engaged in. But are you not more, or rather for renting the garment? for vain Ceremonies, and humane invented observations? How then comes this discrepancy betwixt the heart of God and your hearts? between Gods mind and your minds? Inquire well into the matter, for there must be a fault some where; and it cannot be on the Lords part. Hath not God told you by his own Son, *That he is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth; and that his Father seeketh such to worship him*, Joh. 4. 23, 24. And will you seek such to punish them? Examine your selves, and do not think to shamm it off, That 'tis for the *Church* that you do this. Pray turn to 1-Sam. 15. and you will there find one of the greatest Cheats that you meet with in the whole Word of God; for 'twas by a *Magistrate*, and a Magistrate of the highest *Order*, and 'twas a *Cheat* that had a pretence for the *Church* too. The businels is this: King *Saul* received a *commission* from God to go and smite the *Amalekites*, for laying wait for *Israel* in their way when they came up from *Egypt*; and the summ of the *Commission* you have in the third verse, *Go and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and sucking, ox and sheep, camel and ass.* Pursuant to this *Commission*, *Saul* gathers 210000 of the people together, and goes up and smote the *Amalekites*, but spared *Agag* their King, and the best of their sheep, and of the oxen, and the fattlings, and the lambs, and all *that was good*; and would not utterly destroy them. But every thing that was *vile* and *refuse*, that they *destroyed* utterly, *vers. 9.* Upon this breach of his *Commission*, the Lord sends his Prophet *Samuel* to meet *Saul* at his return, and you find that *Saul* met *Samuel* in a very brisk humour, *vers. 13.* for *Saul* said unto him, *Blessed be thou of the Lord, I have performed the commandments of the Lord.* But *Samuel* replied, *What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?* *vers. 14.* And now pra-

See the Cheat that Saul would have put upon the Almighty, and his Prophet ; for he saw he was run on ground, and therefore observe his answer : *The people (says he) spared the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God*, ver. 15. So he would have shewed off, and excused his sin upon the specious pretence of maintaining the *Church*, and the *Worship* of *God*. But this would not do, for the Prophet reproves him in ver. 22. thus : *Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord ? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams ; for Rebellion is as the sin of Witchcraft.* 'Tis the disobedience of a King against his *God* is so stiled ; and therefore he proceeds and tells him his doom, *That because he had rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord had rejected him from being King.* And that's all that Saul got by this Cheat.

Do not think therefore to palliate your faults with your esteem for the *Church*, and the Divine Service of *God* ; for *God* had rather have no such *Worship* at all, than a *Worship* that must be supported and maintained by the breach of his holy Commands. In the 7th. of *St. Mark*, you may see a knot of *Hypocrites*, and such as were of no inferior rank neither. So much for the *Church*, that they break not only the *Law of God*, but the *Law of Nature* too ; for the *Law of Nature* as well as the *Law of God*, obligeth us to honour our *Parents*, and as a part of that honour, to succour and relieve them in their necessities ; but they were so *unnaturally Religious*, that they would give to the *Church* what they should give to their *Parents* ; and by their gift to the *Church* they were held absolved from the *Law of God and Nature*, to do ought for their father or mother, ver. 11, 12. so that let their father and mother starve if they would, for them, they were resolved to be superabundantly *Religious*. But *God* bless us from such an unnatural and abominable *Religion* ! Well therefore might our Saviour conclude that Discourse with this remark, That *Traditional men*, and such as are so much for exterior observations, do ever make the *Word of God* of no effect, ver. 13. You were as good have no *Bibles*, for they will suffer you to make no use of them ; for these *Jews* they had the *Law of Moses*, and it was read in their *Synagogues* every *Sabbath day*, as *St. James* assures us, *Act. 15. 21.* And though in that *Law* it was written, *Honour thy father and mother*, and that

too with a promise of *length of days*; yet you see when mens Traditions prevailed, it had been as good they had had no Law at all. And therefore by the way, whatsoever Profession or form of Religion makes you *barbarously fowre and unnatural* to your Relations, friend and neighbours, which the Law of God, and the bands of Humanity obligeth you to love, respect and tender, you may lay your life upon it, that that Profession and form of Religion is but a false and counterfeit Christianity, be what it will. Wherefore you that are *Magistrates* had need examine and try your selves, and to purpose too, whether you are for that Religion which is acceptable to God, the renting of your heart? or whether you are for that only which consists in renting the garments, and trifling reservations. And so much to the *Magistrates*.

The next Head is to the *Ministers*; and would to God there were no cause to press the improvement of this Point upon us also. But methinks I hear the Lord saying, *Physician cure thy self*, Luk. 4. 23. We are called the *Physicians of Souls*, and usually say the *care of Souls* is on us; and it behoves the *Physician* to look well to it, that the remedy he prescribes be warrantable and proper against the distemper, or else we shall prove our selves to be like *Jobs friends*, *Physicians of no value*, Job 13. 4. Wherefore let us examine our selves and see whether we that are so abounding in our *Prescriptions* to cure others, are sound our selves? and let us be content to try our selves by this Text, Whether we are more for renting the heart, or for renting the garments? for the *life, spirit and power of Religion*, or for some *little jejune and starveling ceremonies and crotchetly observations*? Whether we are not more reconciled to, and have a stronger affection for a lewd and wicked *Conformist* than for a *virtuous* and *sober Nonconformist*? And pray God our own Consciences do not answer for us, that this is true. For 'tis a strange venom of spirit that some of us are too apt to discover upon all occasions against such as differ but in the least from us in *outward forms of Worship*, though they are never so *exact and exemplary* in their lives, and every way are of a sound and *Orthodox faith*. What invictives have we in our *Pulpits*, out of our *Pulpits*, in all Companies, and at all seasons against *Dissenters*? especially against their *Ministers*? In *Numb. 11. 27*. you find a *young Informer* running.

running to *Moses*, and telling him that *Eldad* and *Medad* were *Prophecying*, or *Preaching* in the *Camp*; upon this information, *Joshua* that then waited upon *Moses*, was but a *young man* too, and would have had *Moses* *forbid* them; (but he lived to be both older and wiser) but see how that meek servant of the Lord answers them, v. 29. *Envieſt thou for my ſake ! would to God that all the Lord's people were Prophets, and that the Lord would put his ſpirit upon them :* as it he had said, you tell me of Two that are *Prophecying* in the *Camp*, and I would to God there were twice 200000 there. Now do not we like this *young man*, run to the *Magistrates* with our *informations*, and cry out, here's a *Conventicle*, and there's a *Conventicle*, and *Eldad* and *Medad* pray in this and preach in that place; and then you pray and pray the *Magistrate* that he would *forbid* them; nay not *forbid* them only, but that he would send to *apprehend* them, and clap them up into *Gaol*; and all this at a time too, when *wickedness covers the face of the whole land*, and grows up so rank under our *Ministry*, that it is not able to top it: Pray let us examine and see, whether this spirit be agreeable to the spirit of *Moses*, or to the spirit of this *young informer*. St. *Paul* tells you of some that preached Christ even out of *envy and strife*, as some preached him out of *good-will*, Phil. 1. 15. Now if any preachers were to be forbidden, one would think these should be they; and yet the *Apostle* professeth that he did rejoice that Christ was preached even every way, whether in pretence, or real sincerity; so that admit they did preach out of no principle, but *envy only*, yet you see, that a *true Apostolical spirit* can and will rejoice at their preaching, though emulation or envy only prompts them to it; let us reflect then, what it is that acts us in this *unchristian*, I had almost said *inhumane* rage against our *dissenting brethren*: for it is not (whatever we may pretend) the *Spirit of God*; for that you see is of another nature and temper, and acts those that are under its conduct in as different a practice from this of ours, as is *light* from *darkness*; and pray God we come not nigher the character of those blind guides spoken of in Mat. 23. 13. *that ſhut up the Kingdom of Heaven againſt men, and neither go in our ſelves, nor ſuffer them that are entring to go in*; and if we are of the number of these, how unfit are we to teach others the mind of God? and to guile their feet into the ways of *peace*, that are not able to guide our ſelves. Doth not our *envy* at them therefore rather arise from this *consideration*, (if envy can be considerate) that we are afraid that people ſeeing the

the vileness of our conversation, and the sobriety of theirs, the *laziness* of our Ministry, and the *laboriousness* of theirs, will at last come to be more in love with them than with us: For if the generality of professed Christians should come to that pitch in Religion, as to be for renting the heart and not the garments, I doubt we should be out of esteem, for they would then be for a *Ministry* suitable to their profession; whereas we are a Ministry mostly for renting the garments, and exterior observances; so that whenever the people rise but one degree above that ignorance, that we are obliged to keep them in, we naturally go out as a stinking snuff, and there is a *Mene Tekel* on our Ministry: wherefore is it not from hence that we *drown* the Magistrates continually to down with them, for fear that the soundness of their doctrine, and the uprightness of their lives, will down with *Rome* and *Renown*; and is it not from hence, that we are every where laying out, and engaging our selves and interest in getting the *worst* of *Magistrates*, the *worst* *Parliament-men*, the *worst* *Justices*, the *worst* *Mayors*, &c. that all the Countries and Cities can afford; insomuch that it is almost become the surest indication of a *Knafe*, to have us Clergy men for him; and of an *honest man* to have us against him, that can be given; for our breath blesses every man we are against, and blasts every man we are for. Examine the matter, and see whether you do not find all this too true; and can the world ever believe us a good *Ministry*, while we are so engaging for a bad Magistracy? or will they ever believe us to be true Protestants, while they see us join Votes and Hands with profest'd Papists? The Romanists contriv'd, and are carrying on an Hellish Plot against the life of our King, Government and Protestant Religion, and when God in infinite mercy was pleased to discover it, have not many of us shewed our selves peevishly backward to credit such discovery, and no less forward to undervalue reproach, or scandalize the discoverers? The same Engineers of Hell since forged a false, wicked sham plot to be cast on the Presbyterians, and thereby cut off the most active Protestants, and divers of as good Church of *England*-men as any in the land; and did not some of us nurse up that *spurious Brat* for them, and make our Pulpits rattle, and our hearears ears tingle, with Railings against Presbyterians; and all this without the least occasion, and when it was impossible to serve any other than a Popish Interest by it? Is stiling a Popish Plot, and causelessly inraging as much as in us lies the Magistrate against Protestant-Dissenters, and endeavouring to ab-
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Solve Popish delinquents from deserved punishments, the way to suppress Popery? or crying up and espousing the interest of a Bi-gotted Popish Successor any demonstration of our zeal to the Protestant Religion? The Prophet *Zephaniah* tells us of a strange odd kind of dappled people that lived in his Age, that did *swear by the Lord, and that swear by Melcham*, (i. e.) by the true God, and by a false God too, *Zeph. 1. 5.* somewhat too like many of the Ministers and Popish-Protestants that are for our Church, and the Church of *Rome* too, and indeed for any Church (provided they are but for *renting the garments*, and superficial observances, and lip-labour only, and can withal keep their Honours, Preferments and Revenues): You read in *Exod. 12. 38.* That a mixed multitude went up with the children of *Israel* out of *Egypt* (for we are but party-colour'd and mixt men at the best) where I take mixed multitudes for men of mixed spirits. But upon what grounds or inducements they went up, we do not find; but this we find, that upon all occasions they were the forwardest to murmur, and repine, and for returning into *Egypt* again: The like may be said of many that came out of the Roman bondage with us in the first Reformation; upon what account they came with us we know not, but this we know, that these men of mixed spirits have always been for returning to old idolatrous *Garlick* and *Onyons*, I mean to *Rome* again. Let us therefore, I say, examine our hearts, and upon a strict impartial disquisition, it will be well if many of us of the Clergy do not find that most of our envy and passion against our dissenting brethren proceeds from this, that they are for going *forwards* still, and further *Reforming*, whereas we are for going back, or for staying where we are, at the best: And I doubt the truest Reason of our hatred to them, is that they are for *renting the Heart*, which is grounded on the Commands of God, and that we are for *renting the garments*, and outward Ceremonies, which are founded on the fancies or superstitions of men; wherefore the Lord grant that we may examine our selves thoroughly in this matter.

And so I pass to the Third and last Head of this Examination, and with which I shall conclude, and that is to the People.

3. Is it so, that true *Repentance*, and such as is acceptable to God, consists not in *renting the garments*, &c. then examine your selves whether ever you did *truly repent* or no? whether in duties of this kind that we are now a celebrating, you have not been like those in

Mat. 58. that fasted for strife and debate, and to strike with the fij of wickedness ; that hung down their heads like a bulrush, and spread sackcloth and ashes under them ; or like those hypocrites that the Lord speaks of in Mat. 6. that put on sad countenances, and disfigured their faces, that they might appear unto men to fast. But this is of no value, but only to aggravate your condemnation ; 'tis not your putting on your black, nor your pulling off your Patches, nor your Paint, or laying aside your Ruffian Periwigs for a day that the Lord respects : No, no, this amounts to nothing in his sight ; examine your selves therefore, for if you have only rent your garments, and performed the outward part of Religion, think of your selves what you will, you are but in a miserable condition : That is a mighty word of our Lord in Matt. 21. 28, 29, 30. *A certain man* (says our Saviour) *had two sons, and he came to the first, and said, Son go work to day in my vineyard ; he answered and said, I will not ; but afterwards repented, and went ; and he came to the second, and said likewise, and he answered and said, I go Sir, but went not.* His second son seems to pay great observance to his fathers pleasure ; and to be a perfect conformist to his fathers commands, very ceremonious and reverential in his answer, *I go Sir* (says he) ; but for all these good words, and exterior appearances of obedience, he was of a wicked, false, deceitful heart, and did but delude his father with his conformity, for he never went to the work commanded. Now examine whether of the sons you are ; for if you are not of the number of those that only refused to go, yet afterwards repented and went, you are certainly of the race of the second son, that said, *I go Sir, but lyed, and went not.*

But that you may be more faithful to your selves in the discharge of this duty of examination, try your selves in these Two particulars.

1. How your *affections* stand.
2. How your *wills* are inclined.

1. How your *affections* stand, search your souls, and see whether you are more in love with renting your garments, or renting your hearts ; whether you are more taken with the new fashion'd modes and gaities of a glittering, formal, exterior profession, or

with the old fashion'd plainness, and sincerity of Gospel-worship. In 2 King. chap. 5. you have a great man coming to *Elisha* to be cleared of his *Leprosie*, and he came in great *state* with his *Horses* and *Chariots*, and stood at the door of the house of *Elisha*, and *Elisha* sent a *Messenger* unto him, saying, *Go and wash in Jordan seven times*, and thy flesh shall come again to thee; and thou shall be clean, vers. 9. 10. Now here was the end for which he came; for his end was to be *clean*; but because the *means* to that end was not so formal and full of ceremony as he would have them, he went away in a huff, vers. 15. And *Naaman* was *wroth*, and went away and said, Behold I thought the Prophet would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the *Leper*. And because the Prophet did not follow those methods in cleansing, which he had *fancied*, he turns, and went away in a rage. But you find that he had some *wit* in his anger; and though he would not hear the Lord's servant, yet he would hear his own servant reason him out of his *Choler*; and then he went into *Jordan* seven times, according to the saying of the man of God, and was cleansed, vers. 13, 14. Now examine your selves, whether this be not your case; you would be cleansed, but it must be by such *gentle* and *ceremonial* methods as you fancy, or else you are *wroth* and going away in a chaff, as *mediums* too mechanick and beneath your grandure; try now your affections in such a case, is not the simplicity and plainness of the Gospel an *offence* to you? and are you not for *Humane Trappings* and *Gauderries*, that may put a greater *finery* and *pomp* upon them, so that you are *wrath* with all those that think *sound Truths* are the greatest *beauties* when they are most *unarted*, and in their own *dress*? Sound your affections therefore how they stand in this case. Whether they be for *inward work*, *renting the heart*, or *outward*, only for *renting the garments*; and if they give the preference to *heart-work*, they are certainly right, and well set for God; but if to *formality*, *ceremony*, and *exterior observations*, they are most assuredly wrong, how right soever you may think them to be.

Secondly, Examine and see how your *will* is inclined, and this both to your selves, and towards others.

First, To your selves, you see the will of God both negatively and affirmatively, both in what you should, and what you should not do herein; that you should *rent your hearts*, and that you should not *rent your garments*: Examine then whether your wills be not croſſ and averie to this will of God; that though God hath bid you *rent your hearts, and not your garments*, yet you will rent your garments, and not your hearts: you will be for *formal* and exterior obſer- vations, rather than for that unfeigned repentance that is acceptable unto God. It is said Psal. 40. 8. *I delight to do thy will, O God.* Examine then whether your will takes up a delight to be conformable to the will of God; you pray every day, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*; search therefore your own souls, and see whether your will and heart be in that *petition*, or whether you say it only by rote and custom; if your will be well inclined to it, then you will conform to the will of God here in the Text, and not set up your *posts* against Gods posts, nor your will against Gods will, as you certainly do, if you are for renting the garments before renting the heart; and for formal obſer- vances, before true and spiritual Worship. Many a time in the Gospel you find our Lord answering supplicants, *Thus be it unto thee according as thou wilt.* O examine then your wills, how they stand inclined, for if they are not bent to God, it were *mercy* to you if you miss'd your *own wills*; So Saul found it before his conversion, he would needs be going to *Damascus*, (while he was breathing out blood and cruelty to persecute the poor Christians there also): but Almighty mercy prevented and made him miss his will, in *Acts 9.* Among the many offerings which were in the time of the Law, there was one which was called a free will offering, to which the Psalmist alludes, Psal. 119. 108. *Accept, I beseech thee, says he, the free will offerings of my mouth, O Lord:* and this offering above all the offerings seems to be most acceptable unto God; it was purely voluntary, because unconstrained; therefore towards the place for the first publick Worship, you find the people so liberal in this offering, that Moses was fain to restrain them from offering any more, *Exod. 36. 6.*

Now examine your selves, whether your wills are thus bent for God; whether you voluntarily and without any reluctance or constraint ſo cloſe with this holy pleasure and command of God; nor to buſt your ſelves about the many things of renting your gar-

ments, and keeping a *busb*le about the formal ceremonious outward modes of Worship; but have your wills taken up and wholly inclined to the one and only thing necessary, *the renting of your heart*; and if upon a thorow search you find your wills thus well inclined to your selves,

Then *Secondly*, examine how they stand as to *others*: for many are for that for themselves, which they would deny to others; they would be *free* themselves in their *Worship*, but they would put a force on others. Examine therefore how your wills stand inclined in this particular; are you willing to give another the *same measure* that you would have meeted to you again; do you love your neighbour as your self, and are willing that he should rent his heart, and worship God according to the perswasion of his Conscience; though he do not rent his garments, nor perform those formal and exterior observations that you do, as you your selves are willing to worship God according to the perswasion of your own Conscience? are you willing to maintain the *unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*, agreeable to that great exhortation, *Eph. 4.3.* Or do your wills incline you to break all the bonds and tyes of unity, love and peace, which *God* and *Nature* have laid upon you; because your neighbour doth not rent his garments, and perform such formal and exterior observations as you would have him? In *Mat. 13. 14.* our Lord put forth a Parable of a man which sowed *wheat*, or good seed in his field, and in the 25th an enemy came and sowed *tares* among the *wheat*; in the 26th. *vers.* the *tares* appeared, in the 27th. *vers.* the Ministers or servants tell their master of it; in the 28th. *vers.* they ask the Master leave to root them out; *Wilt thou, say they, that we go and gather them up?* For they were willing to the work, had he been so. But now pray observe their masters answer, and the reason thereof in the 29th. *vers.* *But he said, nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.* And in the 30th. *vers.* ye have the Masters express command, *Let both grow together until the harvest*; and this harvest our Lord himself tells you (in the explanation of this Parable) *is the end of the world*, *vers. 39.* And it is well, we have our Masters mind in this matter, for else here would be mad work in the world; for you see that the very *Ministers* are for rooting up; and pray whether would this go? and where would

would be an end of it? for we reckon the *Dissenters* *tares*; and we would be a rooting up of them; then the *Papists* reckon us the *tares*, and they would be rooting out of us. And 'tis well if the *Turk* do not reckon both them and us all *tares*, and would be a rooting up both them and us, and the whole *Christian name* for *tares*. So that all the bonds not only of *Christianity* would be broken, but those of common society also. Therefore try your *wills* by this command of your Masters; for admit the *Dissenters* were *tares*, which without a notorious breach of *Christian charity* you can never judg them to be; for truly bate but their *not renting their garments*, their *conformity* to a few formal and exterior Ceremonies, they give as good an evidence, that they are *wheat*, and *good grain*, as the best of us can do; but I say admit they were, yet here is the will and mind of your Lord concerning them; and do you think that he did not know what was most fit and properest to be done in the field of his Church? The *Ministers* you see then (and I do not perceive that they have altered their temper yet) were eager and hot to root them up; *Wilt thou*, say they, *that we go and gather them up*; *Nay*, says our Lord, *lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat also*. He knew whither that zeal would tend, and that though it pretended to root up none but *tares*, yet it would fall upon the *wheat* too; and therefore gives them a positive command, to *let them both grow together until the harvest*. Wherefore do you find your *wills* secondeing the will of God in this command? Or have you a rising of heart against it? Examine well the matter, for if your *wills* conform not to the will of *Christ* your Master, even in this particular, whatever opinion you may have of your selves, you are the *worst Nonconformists* that the Church hath in it; for your Nonconformity is of a cruel and a *bloody* nature, and such as would make the Church a *Shambles*. You see what work the *Inquisition* hath made in the world, and all those murders and mischiefs that it hath committed, have been perpetrated under the pretence of plucking up of *tares*. Make a thorough inquiry therefore into your hearts, and search the most inward recesses of your souls, how the inclinations of your *wills* are in this point, lest you also fulfill that dreadful Prophecy of our Saviour, *Of setting a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law, and make a mans foes*

foes to be those of his own household, Mat. 10 35, 36. And left under the pretence of Law, you break all the Laws of God, Nature, Duty, and Relation; to the observance of which you are so strictly enjoined. But if you find your wills inclined to answer the will of Christ, and will use no other force than Gospel arguments, and an upright conversation, to convert and turn the *Tares* to be good seed, and are willing that others should live quietly; that rent their hearts, though they do not conform to such rending of the garments, to such exterior forms and Ceremonies as you practice; then have we ground to believe, that *God will accept us*; and turn away that deluge of wrath which threatens our *King*, our *Church*, our *Princes*, our *Nobles*, and all ranks, degrees, and orders of men in the Land; for the aversion of which we do solemnize this day; and which *God* of his infinite mercy grant for his dear Sons sake, our *Lord Jesus Christ*, *Amen.*

F I N I S.

